THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Registered Cable Operators in the Country

2947. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of registered Cable Operators operating in the country as per latest assessment and percentage growth over the past five years, State-wise particularly in Maharasthra;

(b) what is the tariff charged by Cable Operator and range of inter-state variation and inter-city variation in Maharashtra;

(c) the estimated revenue collected by the Cable Operators in Maharashtra and taxes paid to Government alongwith the estimates of evasion of taxes by the Cable Operators; and

(d) the major problems raised by the organisations of Cable Operators and steps taken to resolve them?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) and (b) Rates charged by different cable operators in the country are not maintained by Government. The statistics regarding the total number of registered cable operators are not maintained centrally. The Report on "Indian Media Sector", prepared by HSBC in October 2000, estimates that there are 30,000 local cable operators in the country.

(c) Data with regard to revenue collected by operators in different States and taxes paid by them to Government are not compiled separately. There are no estimates evasion of taxes, if any, by the cable operators in Maharashtra.

(d) Some of major problems raised by the cable operators are (i) hiking of subscription fees by pay channels (ii) compulsion to show all the pay channels of a particular channel company i.e. bundling of channels. (iii) impositon of Entertainment Taxes by State Government etc. The charges levied by private channels are determined by market forces and Government has no *locus standi* in this regard.

Auction of Prime-Time Slots by Prasar Bharati

2948. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the private broadcasters are trying to create a parallel revenue stream by using DD's infrastructure;

(b) whether any decision has been taken by the Prasar Bharati for auctioning its prime time slots to private Broadcasters;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether DD maintaines any norms for auctioning times slots;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether it is also a fact that DD's aproach to maximize revenue adversely affects the obligatory responsibilities; and

(g) the reaction of Goverment thereto?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATIONAND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) Prasar Bharati has informed that Doordarshan facilities viz. Studios and Satellite uplink, if requested for, are made available to outside agencies including private broadcasters on payment basis, when not in use by Doordarshan.

(b) and (c) Prasar Bharati had taken a decision to allot bulk airtime on auction basis to bring the DD-Metro channel in line with the prevailing market situation. Prasar Bharati has informed that the time slots between 7 p.m.—9 p.m. and 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. were allotted to M/s Nine Network Australia Pty. Ltd., through an open bid process, for a period of one year, expiring on 10.9.2001 and 15.10.2001 respectively. The time slots from 10 p.m. to 0030 a.m. were already vacant. Therefore, open bids were invited for the airtime from 7 p.m. to 0030 a.m. with a floor price of Rs. 115 crores, for 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., and without any floor price for the slots from 11 p.m. to 0030 a.m. In response only, one bid was received for the 11 p.m. to 00 hours slot, from M/s Moving Pictures Company India Private Limited with an offer of Rs. 50 lakhs net. Prasar Bharati then took a decision to invite fresh bids for 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. slots without fixing any floor price. Even though three bids were received, these were considered too low and rejected.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. Prasar Bharati has intimated that Doordarshan closely monitors the market dynamics and while inviting bids incorporates all such features. The bid document details the rules, regulations, the procedure of selection, the commercial time available and other terms and conditions.

(f) and (g) No Sir. Doordarshan has a bouquet of 21 channels. While most of the other Doordarshan channels are committed to the Public Service Broadcasting thereby, fulfilling the obligations set forth, DD-2 (Metro Channel) has positioned itself as terrestrial/satellite entertainment channel and efforts are made to exploit its full commercial potential.

Amount spent for improvement in the level of Non-Prime-Time News

†2949. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the total amount spent by Government for improvement in the level of non-prime-time news;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of the expenditure incurred on the commissioned programmes given by Doordarshan; and

(d) the rate of remuneration paid for news reading on Doordarshan?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) and (b) An amount of Rs. 3.24 crores was spent during 2000-2001 for overall improvement of news bulletins including non-prime-time news. These include expenditure on news feeds, sets, graphics, montage and stringers.

(c) An amount of Rs. 39 crores was spent during the year 2000-2001 on commissioning of News & Current Affairs programmes.

(d) The details are given in the Statement.

Statement

Fee structure of Newsreaders of Doordarshan

1.	For Prime Time 8.30 & 9.00 p.m. Bulletins	Rs. 1,200 per bulletin
2.	For other bulletins	Rs. 1,000 per bulletin

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.